

REVIEWS

The Valley of the Second Sons. Edited by William Weber. 2004. Pilgrims Process, 4066 Niblick Dr., Longmont, CO. 567 pp. Softcover \$39.95. ISBN 0-9710609-9-1.

At the end of an enviable scientific career, Theodore Dru Alison Cockerell (1866–1948), distinguished entomologist and longtime zoology professor at the University of Colorado, had generated a record bibliography of 3904 published works. Now in a hefty compendium, Dr. William A. Weber, retired curator of the University of Colorado Herbarium, has added to this bibliography hundreds of Cockerell's early personal letters written during 1887–1890. These epistles, sent from an isolated mountain valley in the southern Colorado Rockies to England, were for fellow naturalist Frederic Fenn and his sister Annie, whose father was author George Manville Fenn. Although Theo and Annie were in love, George objected to young Cockerell because of his socialistic ideas and weak constitution, and for months the couple could only communicate through Frederic.

At twenty years of age Londoner Theo, diagnosed with consumption, had repaired to the Wet Mountain Valley for its restorative climate. He joined a congregation of kindred British health seekers as well as adventurous young Englishmen and other settlers in the environs of West Cliff village on the eastern flank of the Sangre de Cristo Range. The vale was informally known as "the Valley of the Second Sons" because of its multitude of British expatriates.

Cockerell's chatty correspondence, often written daily, usually wordy, occasionally including sketches, and always more enthusiastic after a mail delivery from London, dealt in part with the routine of frontier life: repairing cabins, finding lost horses, planting vegetables. But more interesting were the many natural history observations, commentaries on newspapers and magazines that Cockerell received, discussion of books which Theo and the Fenns were reading, the programs of the local natural history and literary societies Cockerell had founded, his diversity of correspondents, descriptions of acquaintances, the mountain valley social life, exchanges on politics, women's affairs, love and marriage, housekeeping, illness, employment, evolution, religion. . . .

The Wet Mountain Valley was a mining district in decline, but Cockerell's letters represent rich historical "mother lodes" waiting to be mined. From these one could compile the first springtime arrival dates of local birds, European weeds which Cockerell encountered in frontier Colorado, good books and authors worth exploring today, a roster of Wet

Mountain Valley's butterflies and mammals, a comparison between fungi of England and Colorado, winter weather, topics of frontier debating societies, mountain meal menus, and informative sidelights on who was doing what in America and Europe.

Cockerell and his second wife Wilmatte (Annie died in 1893) are considered by Coloradoans as "their very own" and are buried in Boulder's Columbia Cemetery. Yet commencing with his retirement in 1934, the Cockerells typically wintered in San Diego, California, and Theo died there in a local hospital from a stroke on the morning of January 26, 1948. During the six decades after convalescent Cockerell's adventures in "the Valley of the Second Sons," he actually had many relationships with the Golden State. He supposedly first visited in 1901, and during winter retirement there he continued natural history research, especially on the coastal islands. During the war years, Theo served as curator of the Palm Spring's Desert Museum.

But already by 1888, the California connection had been made, as letters to the Fenns reveal. In October of 1888 Cockerell began a trial subscription to Charles Orcutt's *West American Scientist*, published in San Diego, and he asked to write for the "not remarkable" magazine. His first article, "Notes from Colorado," appeared at the end of that year. The next July, Orcutt invited him to become Associate Editor, and by September Cockerell was busy preparing an index to the publication's first four volumes. Another Californian connection appeared in an April 14, 1889 letter, with Theo relating that Mrs. Freer, a farm wife taking drawing lessons with him, told Cockerell that as a girl she attended a Canyon City school "kept" by Townshend Brandegee. Ah, yes, reflected Cockerell, Brandegee "was the first to collect plants in the district."

Of more lasting California import was the membership application for Cockerell's newly created Colorado Biological Association received in April, 1889, from a Denver substitute teacher and botanist named Alice Eastwood. Then on June 16, Theo heard that Miss Eastwood was at the hotel in West Cliff, but when he visited there, "she was not to be found." Undaunted, T.D.A. finally tracked her down at the hostel by 7 p.m., and they chatted for over two hours: "Certainly I have never enjoyed any talk so much since I left England." Indeed he entirely forgot about supper. The next day, in a letter to his sweetheart Annie Fenn, he reported running into Miss Eastwood in the morning with her fresh collection of flowers, which they examined together. The afternoon "was devoted to a pleasant ramble down the creek," and Eastwood told him of botanizing atop Gray's Peak with biogeographer

Alfred Russel Wallace, with whom, incidentally, Theo had been corresponding. The morning of the 19th, Alice and Theo collected some plants for his botany class of three girls. Then Alice, Theo, and Mrs. Cusack (Cockerell's intellectual and "spiritual" English friend) put their heads together over their herbarium collections. The next day, Alice and Theo "searched again for specimens" in the field, and he, Eastwood, and Mrs. Cusack "sat up late looking over the herbarium." On Miss Eastwood's next to last day, she and Theo talked until ten in the evening about her flower collecting and then discussed William Morris' *Aims of Art*. Again Cockerell missed supper. To Annie, Cockerell wrote that he "Should like to introduce her [Eastwood] to you. I am sure you would like her." On June 22, with T.D.A. at the station "to see her off," 31-year old Alice Eastwood departed by the morning train for Denver and on to southwest Colorado.

Two weeks later, Theo received what he considered "an extraordinary epistle" from Miss Eastwood, predicting that he was destined "to do lots of good in the world" and should take care of his health. When Alice later left Denver to camp out with the "Mesa Verde" Wetherills in the Southwest, she planned to visit the Wet Mountain Valley once more, but unfortunately the train tracks had been washed out.

Cockerell and Eastwood would not meet again in Colorado, but Theo saw to it that Alice replaced him as Colorado Biological Association secretary. Winter and spring of 1890 Alice was in Florida with an ill friend. Theo and Alice exchanged letters, and Eastwood shipped him a box of colorful *Donax* clam shells. In June when Alice, bound again from Denver to Wetherill's Alamo Ranch, contemplated visiting Cockerell, he had already left for England. That December Miss Eastwood accompanied a handicapped friend to San Diego, and in exactly two years she was appointed joint curator of botany with Townshend Brandegee's wife Katharine for the California Academy of Sciences. Decades later Theo and Alice met for lunch at the Academy, and in his *Recollections*, Cockerell reflected that he and Alice in 1889 "could not know that we should be the last survivors of those then actively concerned with Colorado natural history."

Perusing Theodore Cockerell's letters in William Weber's new book will transport one back to that "Valley of the Second Sons," looking forward to the next mail delivery. Readers of this magnum opus will agree with Alice Eastwood, who wrote of Cockerell, "I have learned much from you."

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